

## Far East NCIS honored for Iraq work



Jim Schulz / S&S, A group of Naval Criminal Investigative Service agents from the Far East Field Office in Yokosuka, Japan, pose Friday for a photograph after receiving awards for their deployment to Iraq.

### Stars and Stripes

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Agents who volunteered for duty downrange recognized

By Juliana Gittler, **Stars and Strips** Pacific edition

YOKOSUKA NAVAL BASE, Japan - Naval Criminal Investigative Service agents and Yokosuka community members gathered Thursday to recognize a dozen agents for their service in Iraq.

The agents, from the NCIS Far East Field Office, served a variety of missions downrange, from investigating crimes and attacks to helping thwart future attacks.

For their efforts, NCIS deputy director Robert Thompson visited Japan to present the civilian agents with a Meritorious Civilian Service Medal and military members a Navy Achievement Medal.

Thompson said in the new age of terrorism, agents play a much more involved role countering foreign terrorism, protecting coalition forces and helping to create peace.

All of the 200 or so NCIS agents who have served in Iraq so far volunteered for the duty. "I think that speaks volumes about the caliber of our agents," he said.

Their time in Iraq put the agents in danger and opened them to new experiences, working with other services under pressure.

Special Agent Tony Bain returned from Iraq last month. He said living and working with Marines at Al Taqaddum Air Base near Fallujah gave him much more experience interacting closely with military members every day.

He investigated all manner of crimes -- smuggling, drugs, theft and sexual assaults, a departure from the felony-level crimes he usually encounters as an agent.

In the absence of a police force or criminal investigative body, he worked with all four services.

"We were basically the law enforcement for the base," he said.

While serving in Baghdad in the Strategic Counter-Intelligence Directorate, a joint office in the International Zone, Assistant Special Agent in Charge Sandy Macisaac witnessed Iraq's first democratic elections and helped safeguard the security of forces

through his work.

He volunteered as soon as the war kicked off. Serving in Iraq gave him "a sense of mission and duty. The opportunity to be involved in something of such importance," he said.

The severity of the situation there made his role much more clear, unlike in peacetime where the rewards and accomplishments are more subtle, he said.

Special Agent Jeffrey Seay, one of the first to serve in Iraq, said he volunteered immediately. As he was about 50, it may have been his last chance to serve in Iraq, he said.

He served as the only NCIS agent in an Air Force detachment in Irbil -- an interesting, at times challenging, change, he said. Despite the differences, much of the job was the same.

"Foundationally, the job is almost exactly the same as what I do here," he said. "It was an important experience, I think, for all of us."

Many of the agents volunteered to return to Iraq. Thompson said that was one of the recurring themes he saw when interviewing returning agents, along with their seriousness of purpose and the strong working relationships they developed between different armed services.

He complimented the agents' creativity, flexibility and commitment: "They clearly demonstrated [their] resolve and commitment to counterterrorism."